

**Book Reviews**

through cultural codes (stereotypes). Greene has presented an important scholarly discourse on racialist content in the Apes series, strongly confirming intentionality.

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**References**

Cripps, Thomas. *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993

Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film (Culture and the Moving Image)*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993

Snead, James, et al. *White Screen/Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side*. New York: Routledge, 1994

**Wendy S. Hesford. *Framing Identities: Autobiography and the Politics of Pedagogy*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). xxviii, 207pp., \$49.95 cloth, \$19.9 paper.**

Drawing on her experiences as a teacher of writing for six years at Oberlin College, Wendy S. Hesford in *Framing Identities: Autobiography and the Politics of Pedagogy* addresses important and timely questions, such as “How do historically marginalized groups expose the partiality and presumptions of institutional histories and truths through autobiographical acts?”(xx)

Hesford adopts Mary Louise Pratt's definition of the “contact zone” and applies it to sites of unequal interaction in the academy, ranging from composition classrooms to struggles over sexual offense policies, student activism, and professional conferences, among others. In the case of each of these contact zones, Hesford explores how autobiographical acts can be used by members of oppressed or marginalized groups

to challenge or subvert hierarchies and to negotiate positions of authority within institutional frameworks of discourse. Such acts, Hesford asserts, can ideally function as “transformative cultural practices”(141).

Hesford acknowledges, however, that autobiography is not without its risks. She warns for example, of the dangers of the kind of self-disclosure that can lead to the “witnessing” subject being recuperated as the object of voyeurism and of the importance of avoiding essentialism in terms of the self that is being disclosed as any given time. Uses of autobiography, she stresses (and this is particularly relevant with regard to her discussion of the feminist writing classroom), must take account of the social construction of the self by such factors as race, class, history, and culture and must avoid reinforcing existing binaries, including that of the student/teacher relationship while at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of establishing false empathies. Clearly, then, [a]utobiography is not an unequivocally empowering medium, but it does have the pedagogical potential of initiating critical reflexivity about self positioning”(95).

*Framing Identities* does have its flaws. Hesford’s fundamentally cogent argument does in places threaten to sink beneath the weight of a ponderous theoretical framework—although on a more positive note, as a result of this framework she book provides the book with an extremely useful bibliography. Perhaps more importantly many readers (particularly those affiliated with academic institutions radically different from Oberlin) may wish for more suggestions as to how Hesford’s theoretical precepts may be employed in practice. What “travels” from Hesford’s Oberlin experience to that of others, she says in her conclusion, “is not the transmission of pedagogical truths but critical aims and goals”(155). Readers may grant this but still welcome the inclusion of more broadly applicable practical strategies whereby these goals may be made a reality.

Nevertheless, Wendy S. Hesford has written a useful and provocative book that focuses attention on the ways in which autobiographical subjects attempt to negotiate a position within broader cultural narratives. She makes clear that, despite the risks involved, one of the most important uses of the auto-

biographical stance is that it forces attention on and provokes questioning of the basic assumptions and configuration of the discourse of the academy: "A subject's recognition of social, rhetorical, and ideological frames and constraints can enable the production of transformative cultural projects and subject positions"(xxxv). The risks, then, are worth the attempt.

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**Sandra Jackson and Jose Solis Jordan (eds.). *I've Got a Story To Tell: Identity And Place In The Academy*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1999). 167 pp., \$29.95 paper.**

*I've Got A Story To Tell* is a "place and space wherein the contributors can momentarily unload the baggage they carry and speak incisively of the challenges associated with their success in gaining entry into the academy" (2).

This text is a collection of thirteen narratives written by faculty of color discussing their experiences in predominantly white institutions of higher education. The narratives discuss the marginalization and trivialization that faculty of color encounter in these institutions. The authors discuss their often painful experiences openly and without restraint or reservation. The issues discussed here are not ones usually discussed openly and may be offensive to some, but as Jackson and Jordan point out, "these narratives are not about feeling good nor about feeling bad; rather they are about feeling deeply and responding to the politics of constraint, suppression, repression, coercion, and conformity" (6). The narratives cover a variety of issues on many levels such as identity, relationships with administrators, peers and students plus curriculum and teaching style.

Regardless of the issues and levels, the most significant influencing factor in all the narratives was the perceived race and ethnic background of the professor. This factor elicited ethnocentric and stereotypical attitudes towards the professors